

1. Misconception: Islam is a religion only for Arabs...

The fastest way to prove that this is completely false is to state the fact that only about **15% to 20%** of the Muslims in the world are Arabs. There are more Indian Muslims than Arab Muslims, and more Indonesian Muslims than Indian Muslims! Believing that Islam is only a religion for Arabs is a myth that was spread by the enemies of Islam early in its history. This mistaken assumption is possibly based on the fact that most of the first generation of Muslims were Arabs, the Qur'an is in Arabic and the Prophet Muhammad was an Arab. However, both the teachings of Islam and the history of its spread show that the early Muslims made every effort to spread their message of Truth to all nations, races and peoples. Furthermore, it should be clarified that not all Arabs are Muslims and not all Muslims are Arabs. An Arab can be a Muslim, Christian, Jew, atheist - or of any other religion or ideology. Also, many countries that some people consider to be "Arab" are not "Arab" at all -- such as Turkey and Iran (Persia). The people who live in these countries speak languages other than Arabic as their native tongues and are of a different ethnic heritage than the Arabs. It is important to realize that from the very beginning of the mission of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his followers came from a wide spectrum of individuals -- there was Bilal, the African slave; Suhaib, the Byzantine Roman; Ibn Sailam, the Jewish Rabbi; and Salman, the Persian. Since religious truth is eternal and unchanging, and mankind is one universal brotherhood, Islam teaches that Almighty God's revelations to mankind have always been consistent, clear and

universal. The Truth of Islam is meant for all people regardless of race, nationality or linguistic background. Taking a look at the Muslim World, from Nigeria to Bosnia and from Malaysia to Afghanistan is enough to prove that Islam is a Universal message for all of mankind - not to mention the fact that significant numbers of Europeans and Americans of all races and ethnic backgrounds are reverting to Islaam in greater and greater numbers.

2. Misconception: Islam degrades women...

Even though many aspects of Islam are misunderstood by non-Muslims, the ignorance, misinformation and incorrect assumptions that are made in regards to Islam's treatment of women are probably the most severe. Numerous verses of the Qur'an make it clear that men and women are equal in the sight of God with respect to rewards for worship and punishments for transgression. According to the teachings of Islam, the only thing that distinguishes people in the sight of God is their level of God-consciousness. Due to this, many people are surprised to find out that Islamic Law guaranteed rights to women over 1400 years ago that women in the Europe and America only obtained recently. For example, Islam clearly teaches that a woman is a full-person under the law, and is the spiritual equal of a male. Also, according to Islamic Law, women have the right to own property, operate a business and receive equal pay for equal work. Women are allowed total control of their wealth, they cannot be married against their will and they keep their own name when married.

Additionally, they have the right to inherit property and to have their marriage dissolved in the case of neglect or mistreatment. Also, Islam does not consider woman an "evil temptress", and thus does not blame women for the "original sin". Women in Islam participate in all forms of worship that men participate in. Actually, the rights that Islam gave to women over 1400 years ago were almost unheard of in the West until the 1900s.

Less than fifty years ago in England and America, a woman could not buy a house or car without the co-signature of her father or husband! Additionally, Islam gives great respect to women and their role in society - It gives them the right to own property, marry who they want and many other rights. Also, it should be mentioned that the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) mission stopped many of the horrible practices in regards to women that were present in the society of his time. For example, the Qur'an put an end to the pagan Arab practice of killing their baby daughters when they were born.

Additionally, Islam put restrictions on the unrestricted polygamy of the Arabs of the time, and put many laws in place to protect the well-being of women. Today, most of the so-called reforms in the status of women came about after the West abandoned religion for secularism. Even those in the West who claim to follow the so-called "Judaean-Christian tradition" really follow the values of Western liberalism - but just to a lesser degree than their more liberal countrymen. If women in the Muslim World today don't have their rights, it is not because Islam did not give them to them. The problem is that in many places alien

traditions have come to overshadow the teachings of Islam, either through ignorance or the impact of Colonialism.

3. Misconception: Muslims worship Muhammad (peace be upon him)...

According to Islamic belief, the Prophet Muhammad was the last Messenger of God. He, like all of God's Prophets and Messengers - such as Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus - was a human being. Christians came to the mistaken assumption that Muslims worship Muhammad by formulating an incorrect analogy - they worship Jesus so they assumed Muslims worship Muhammad. This is one of the reasons that they called Muslims by the incorrect name "Mohammedans" for so many years! Muhammad, like Jesus, never claimed divine status. He called people to worship only Almighty God, and he continually emphasized his humanity so that people would not fall into the same errors as Christians did in regards to Jesus. In order to prevent his deification, the Prophet Muhammad always said to refer to him as "the Messenger of God and His slave". Muhammad was chosen to be God's final Messenger - to communicate the message not only in words but to be a living example of the message. Muslims love and respect him because he was of the highest moral character and he brought the Truth from God - which is the Pure Monotheism of Islam. Even when Islam was in its very early stages, God revealed that Muhammad "was sent as a mercy to all of mankind" - thus informing us that the message of Islam would become very widespread. True Muslims strive to follow the great example of Muhammad, peace be upon him, but they do

not worship him in any way. Additionally, Islam teaches Muslims to respect all of God's Prophets and Messengers - but respecting and loving them does not mean worshipping them. All true Muslims realize that all worship and prayer must be directed to Almighty God alone. Suffice it to say that worshipping Muhammad - or anyone else - along with Almighty God is considered to be the worst sin in Islam. Even if a person claims to be Muslim, but they worship and pray to other than Almighty God, this cancels and nullifies their Islam. The Declaration of Faith of Islam makes it clear that Muslims are taught only to worship God. This declaration is as follows: "There is nothing worthy of being worshipped except for Almighty God, and Muhammad is the Messenger and Servant of God".

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MISCONCEPTIONS

Islam is Only For Arabs?

Do Muslims Worship Muhammad?

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Do Muslims Worship Muhammad?
Does Islam Degrade Women?*

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O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has Piety. (The Noble Qur'an, 49:13)

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